

CHAPTER 5: NIIMS WILDLAND AND PRESCRIBED FIRE QUALIFICATION SYSTEM GUIDE (PMS 310-1)

Policy

Agency policy dictates that only qualified personnel will be assigned duties in wildland fire suppression or prescribed fire. All employees assigned dedicated fire program management responsibilities at the local, geographic area, or national levels shall meet established interagency and agency competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) and associated qualifications. NWCG's *National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide (PMS 310-1)* is the policy.

Introduction

The *NIIMS Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide*, commonly referred to as PMS 310-1 or 310-1, is designed to provide guidance for participating agencies of NWCG. The guide establishes minimum standards required for all Incident Command System and skill positions which all participating agencies have agreed to meet for national mobilization purposes. These minimum standards include physical fitness, required training, and prerequisite experience.

The National Response Plan (NRP) and the PMS 310-1

The NRP (http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial_0566.xml) was developed to establish a comprehensive, national, all-hazards approach to domestic incident management across a spectrum of activities including prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

The primary mission of the BLM fire program is wildland fire management. However, the PMS 310-1 maintains the skills necessary for success in all-risk incidents and supports the preparedness elements of the NRP.

Regardless of source, wildland fire agencies have the ability to make significant contributions to emergency management requirements. PMS 310-1 supports the ability of agency personnel to meet the requirements of the NRP.

Description of the NWCG Performance Based System

The NWCG Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System is a “performance-based” qualifications system. Qualification is based upon demonstrated performance on wildland fires,

prescribed fires, events, incidents, job activities, and in simulated exercises or classroom activities.

Personnel who have learned skills from other sources (structural fire, law enforcement, search and rescue, or other agency-specific training programs), rather than through actual performance on wildland fire or NWCG curricula, may *not be required* to complete specific NWCG courses in order to qualify in an NWCG position.

The primary criterion for qualification is individual performance as observed by an evaluator certified in that position and properly documented in an approved PTB. PTBs contain all critical tasks which are required to perform the job. The process of demonstrating the abilities to perform the position is the completion of a PTB. The tasks in each PTB have been established by subject matter experts from all NWCG agencies and geographical areas of the United States and tested and approved by the NWCG.

PTBs are formatted to allow for documentation of a trainee's ability to perform each task. Tasks pertaining to tactical decision making and safety are coded as a "W" or "RX" and require position performance on a wildland or prescribed fire. Remaining tasks may be evaluated through other means such as a simulation or emergency/non-emergency incident or event.

Successful completion of all required tasks of the position, as determined by the evaluator(s), will be the basis for recommending certification. Certification and documentation of completed PTBs is the responsibility of the employing agency certifying that the individual is qualified to perform in a specific position. Individuals are responsible for providing proof of qualification on an incident.

Components of the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System

1. Position Task Books (PTBs) contain all critical tasks which are required to perform the job. PTBs are formatted to allow for documentation of a trainee's ability to perform each task. Successful completion of all tasks required of the position, as determined by an evaluator, will be the basis for recommending certification.
2. Training courses and job aids provide the specific skills and knowledge required to perform tasks as prescribed in the PTB.
3. Agency certification is issued in the form of an Incident Qualification Card certifying that the individual is qualified to perform in a specified position.

Responsibilities of Administering the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System

The local office is responsible for selecting trainees, proper use of PTBs, and certification of trainees. See Appendix A of NWCG's *NIIMS Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1*, for further information.

Field input such as suggested curriculum changes, updates to course material, modifications, qualification issues, etc., should be channeled to the appropriate BLM NWCG team representative (TWT, FUWT, IOSWT, etc.). The NWCG team representative carries the issue(s) to the team for adjudication. BLM representatives for the various NWCG teams can be found in [Chapter 4](#).

Course coordinators should forward course facilitation feedback and instructor course evaluations to the NWCG Standards Unit at NIFC (E-mail address: nwcg_standards@nifc.blm.gov). The Standards Unit will file the comments and forward them to the appropriate NWCG training developer. All NWCG and BLM developers must review the files that the Standards Unit has compiled regarding their projects.

Certification and Recertification

Agency certification and documentation of successful position performance (completion of the PTB) is the responsibility of the employing agency certifying that the individual is qualified to perform in a specific position.

Each agency is responsible for annually certifying qualifications of its personnel based upon the requirements of the PMS 310-1 and agency-specific requirements supplementing the PMS 310-1. This responsibility includes evaluation of personnel for recertification in cases where position qualifications are no longer valid due to a lack of current experience. Completion of required training and experience alone does not guarantee that an individual will be certified to perform in a position. Certification and recertification is a subjective determination that each individual agency must make based on task evaluations, position performance evaluations, and their own judgment of the quality of an individual's experience.

The quality of experience should be closely evaluated when making a determination for advancement to the next higher position, to a different position, or for recertification. The quality of experience may relate to the variety of fuel types in which an individual has performed, size and complexity of the incident in terms of personnel, equipment, and operations, and the number of assignments.

Agencies shall *not* certify private contractors except where formal agreements are in place. Clauses in contracts are to include stipulations specifying that the service provider must meet the standards found in the PMS 310-1.

Casuals/emergency workers must meet hiring or certifying agency's requirements.

Subcomponents of Position Qualifications

Required Training

Required training provides a direct link between training and job performance to provide for responder health and safe operations on wildland fires. Required training must be completed and cannot be challenged. Agency equivalent courses may be substituted for required courses when learning and performance objectives meet or exceed required course learning and performance objectives.

Note: PTBs can be initiated prior to attending required training in order for trainees to complete “O” coded tasks as part of successfully completing the course. Employees must be certified as a trainee on their Incident Qualification Card.

Required Experience

Required experience includes qualification in any prerequisite position and successful position performance through completion of the PTB. Required experience cannot be challenged.

Fitness Standards

Personnel must meet established physical fitness standards for wildland fire assignments. Agencies may determine the method of evaluating the physical fitness level of their personnel. However, the testing method should be a measurable evaluation process.

The following four categories of physical fitness have been established:

Arduous

Duties involve field work requiring physical performance calling for above-average endurance and superior conditioning. These duties may include an occasional demand for extraordinarily strenuous activities in emergencies under adverse environmental conditions and over extended periods of time. Requirements include running, walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending and lifting more than 50 pounds; the pace of work typically is set by the emergency situation.

Moderate

Duties involve field work requiring complete control of all physical faculties and may include considerable walking over irregular ground, standing for long periods of time, lifting 25 to 50 pounds, climbing, bending, stooping, squatting, twisting and reaching. Occasional demands may be required for moderately strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods of time. Individuals usually set their own work pace.

Light

Duties mainly involve office type work with occasional field activity characterized by light physical exertion requiring basic good health. Activities may include climbing stairs, standing,

operating a vehicle and long hours of work, as well as some bending, stooping or light lifting. Individuals can usually govern the extent and pace of their physical activity. For any position that is assigned to the fireline for non-suppression tasks, the required fitness level shall be “Light.”

None Required

This designation applies to positions that do not require a physical fitness test.

Other Training Which Supports Development of Knowledge and Skills

Although training referenced under this category is not “required,” training for individual positions may include courses or job aids, or knowledge and skills acquired through on-the-job training, work experience, or agency-determined training. These methods are the primary means by which personnel can prepare for position performance evaluation by obtaining specific knowledge and skills required to perform tasks identified in the PTB.

Currency Requirements of the System

For the positions identified in the PMS 310-1, the maximum time allowed for maintaining currency is three (3) years for air operations and dispatch positions and five (5) years for all others.

Currency for a position can be maintained by meeting any of the following requirements:

- Successful performance in the position qualified for within the given timeframe.
- Successful performance in a position identified in the PMS 310-1 as Other Position Assignments That Will Maintain Currency.
- Successful performance in a higher position(s) for which that position is a prerequisite, providing the individual was previously qualified in that position.

Review and Update Process for the PMS 310-1 and Position Task Books

A formal revision of the PMS 310-1 will occur every five years. However, the Incident Operations Standards Working Team (IOSWT) may address special problems at any time. All NWCG agencies will be requested to review and provide input to the proposed revision prior to being adopted by NWCG.

Comments and recommendations on PTBs and the qualification process should be submitted through the appropriate agency official or Geographic Area Coordination Group (GACG) to the IOSWT. While the IOSWT may address issues at any time, the planned revision interval will be five (5) years. Users may submit proposed revisions as needs are identified. The IOSWT will review the proposal, consult with subject matter experts and other NWCG working teams as appropriate, and recommend adoption or rejection by the NWCG. PTBs, which may be

developed for positions not identified within PMS 310-1, must be submitted to the IOSWT for review and consideration for acceptance into the system.

The NWCG/IOSWT Web site (<http://www.nwcg.gov>) contains information regarding updates to the PMS 310-1 and decisions affecting new positions, changes in qualifications, and new or revised Position Task Books. Downloadable, approved PTBs can be found through the Publications Management Systems (PMS) link on the NWCG Web site.

Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System National Training Curriculum (PMS 316)

The Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System National Training Curriculum (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/training/training.htm>) is designed to give the user an orientation and overview of the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System. There are six modules included in the curriculum that provide practical information intended to familiarize the user with the PMS 310-1.